



A funder's perspective: bibliometrics and the arts and humanities

Bibliometrics in AHSS

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Arts and Humanities Research Council

Images sourced from the AHRC's Image Gallery. Showcased here: (clockwise): Windows on War – Russian studies and Drama; British Library's Royal Manuscripts – Digital Humanities; Earthworks - Archaeology and Cultural Geography; 3E Ceramics printing – Design; King's Dome Commission – Visual Arts

AHRC - Royal Charter since 2005



- (a) to **promote and support by any means high-quality basic, strategic and applied research and related postgraduate training in the arts and humanities;**

- (b) to **advance knowledge and understanding of the arts and humanities** (including **promoting and supporting the exploitation of research outcomes and research** relating to cultural aspects of the different parts of Our United Kingdom) and provide trained personnel who meet the needs of their users and beneficiaries, and thereby to contribute to the economic competitiveness of Our United Kingdom and effectiveness of public services and policy, and to enhance the quality of life and creative output of the nation; and

- (c) in relation to the activities as engaged in by the Council under (a) and (b) above and in such manner as the Council may see fit to: (i) **generate public awareness;** (ii) **communicate research outcomes;** (iii) **encourage public engagement and dialogue;** (iv) **disseminate knowledge;** and (v) **provide advice.**

AHRC - 2005 to 2016



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- **c.31.5%** of the UK's research-active academic community within AHRC remit (REF2014*)
- **Approx. 3%** of the research budget (annual budget c. **£100m per annum**)
- **50** (sub)disciplines which include: Languages, Performing Arts, Law, Design, History, Philosophy etc.,
- **83%** of active AHRC research awards are collaborative
- Collaborative partners on AHRC awards are based in **44 countries** across **6 continents**

Celebrating diversity



UK-wide coverage

- AHRC supported over **1400 awards** at **164** HEIs and Independent Research Organisations (IROs) and over **3600 researchers** and 830 PDRAs between 2010/11 and 2014/15. Varied range of HEIs and IROs
- IROs include: The British Museum, National Museums of Scotland, British Library, Tate

Multi/Interdisciplinarity

- At least 67% of portfolio in 01/04/2015 deemed to be inter/multidisciplinary.
- AHRC funded publications submitted to 28 of the 36 REF UoAs

Primary classifications: 19 Research Areas

Archaeology ● Classics ● Cultural and Museum Studies ●
Dance ● Design ● Development Studies ● History ●
Information and Communication Technologies ●
Languages and Literature ● Law and Legal Studies ●
Library and Information Studies ● Linguistics ● Media ●
Music ● Philosophy ● Political Science and International
Studies ● Theology, Divinity and Religion ● Drama and
Theatre Studies ● Visual Arts ●

Other cross-over areas include: International Development ●
Gender studies ● Human Geography ● Social anthropology ●

Strategic/Priority Areas



Priority Areas

- Design
- Heritage
- Modern Languages
 - Open World Research Initiative (OWRI)
- **Creative Economy**

Strategic Themes

- Care for the Future
- Digital Transformations
- Science in Culture

Cross-council areas/ Areas of focus

- Connected Communities
- Global Challenges Research Fund
- Other cross-council programmes: Partnership for Conflict, Crime and Security Research (PaCCS), What Works Centre for Wellbeing, Antimicrobial Resistance etc.,
- World War One Engagement Centres
- Cultural Value Project
- “Fuse” projects

- **Peer review and research evaluation:** the Peer Review College and the Haldane Principle
- **Organisational leadership role** (only organisation of its kind); brokering institutional relationships etc.,
- **Skills and training**
- **Evidence collection and articulation:** making the case for arts and humanities research through landscaping mapping/portfolio analysis and impact evaluation

Why does the AHRC collect evidence of research excellence, outputs, outcomes and impact

- Accountability and reporting requirements to Government
- Champion arts and humanities research
- Increase funding for the arts and humanities research



Arts & Humanities
Research Council
Annual Report
& Accounts
2014-15



RCUK Definition of Impact

The Research Councils consider impact to be *the demonstrable contribution **that excellent research makes to academic advances**, across and within disciplines, including significant advances in understanding, methods, theory and application..*

and

*the demonstrable contribution **that excellent research makes to society and the economy**...Impact embraces all the extremely diverse ways in which research-related knowledge and skills benefit individuals, organisations and nations.*

Academic Research Impact

- New insights and advancing knowledge
- Creating new fields of research
- Supporting research-led teaching
- Creating new degree programmes, institutes etc.,
- New generations of researchers

The wider research impact of the Arts and Humanities



658 REF2014 Impact Case Studies (approx. 30%) referenced the AHRC across the Main Panel D sub-panels and three of the Main Panel C sub-panels. Some of the areas of impact highlighted included:

Community cohesion and engagement

Creative and digital economies

Cultural tourism and regeneration

Influence on practice and practitioners

Informing and influencing policy and policymakers

Areas of impact

Heritage preservation and understanding

Creating and supporting business

Health and wellbeing

Stimulating public debate and changing perceptions

Designing innovative business and policy models

How do we collect evidence

- **Researchfish** (research outputs and outcomes)
- **Additional reporting for large investments**
- **Grants information** (AHRC and other funders)
- **HESA data**
- **REF data**
- **Commissioned studies:** e.g. NCUB Survey of Academics

Using Researchfish information

- Key findings
- Publications
- Research resources (e.g. databases, tools)
- Collaborations
- Further funding
- Non-print research outputs (e.g. software, exhibitions, films, performances)
- Next destinations
- Policy influence
- Spinouts/start-ups
- Dissemination activities
- Free-text section on impact

*Supporting researchers to provide **high quality information** is vital but challenging*

- **Why should AHRC care about bibliometrics?**
REF, UKRI, Digital Transformations, Library Studies and Communications
- **Is it a threat or an opportunity?**
- **What is our role in wider debates and approaches to bibliometrics?**

Challenges

- Coverage
- Discipline taxonomies; different discipline hierarchies
- Anglo-centric coverage
- Tensions between positive/negative citations
- Increasingly used within policy analyses without considering the issues above
- Reach v. significance/excellence

Issues with coverage

Using the REF as a proxy for the types of outputs produced by disciplines:

- 13082 unique ISSNs in the Panel C and Panel D submissions (of those 9877 were journals with DOIs).
- In Panels A & B between 96% and 99.8% of the publications submitted for each REF sub-panel/unit of assessment were journal articles (exception of Computer Science with 72%). Most reported DOIs.
- The average for Panel C was 78% ; approx. 83% had DOIs
- The average for Panel D was 42%; approx. 60% had DOIs

Issues with coverage - researchfish



Publication Types	Instances	Digital ID	Scopus ID	arXiv ID	PMC ID	PubMed ID
TOTAL	24,900	5,618	115	15	182	220
Journal Article	10,367	5,046	84	11	182	220
Book Chapter	5,478	329	8			
Conference Proceeding/Abstract	3,437	143	5	4		
Book/Monograph	2,683	72	12			
Other	1,033	17	4			
Working Paper	638	1				
Book edited	508		2			
Thesis	230					
Technical Report	173	1				
Consultancy Report	112					
Policy briefing_report	105					
Technical Standard	40					
(blank)	30	9				
Manual/Guide	26					
Journal Article/Review	17					
Scholarly edition	13					
book-review	3					
Systematic review	3					
dictionary-entry	2					
dissertation	1					
encyclopedia-entry	1					

Use (and abuse) of publications data

- International comparators of research performance/world rankings
- Research strengths/clusters
- Understanding interdisciplinarity
- Understanding productivity
- Understanding collaboration (nationally, internationally, cross-sector)
- Value of scholarly publishing/publishing generally

Aspirations/new opportunities

- Indicators versus metrics
- Exploring altmetrics
- Encourage more scholarly research on how and when to use bibliometrics
- adapt bibliometrics within a changing digital landscape? What is the role of corpus linguistics for a more context-based approach
- Ensure the arts and humanities are visible within a new UKRI

Next steps

- **What should we be doing?** *Doing nothing is not an option.* REF, UKRI, Digital Transformations Library Studies and Communications
- **Who should we be engaging?**
- **Terminology is important:** Reach v. significance/excellence
- **Be more vocal about the limitations when it is being used for comparative purposes**
- **Explore new opportunities with *all* disciplines in mind**

The challenges for the community(ies)



- Unique Identifiers for everything!
- Revise citation approaches
- New collaborative approaches to taxonomies and taxonomy-use
- Address anglo-centrism
- Making the case for the arts and humanities: making a clear-cut economic case for research funding is always challenging; measuring the intangible benefits is even more so. *We need to keep innovating our approaches to articulating research excellence and impact.*
- Proxies: exploring potential proxies without forgetting that they are proxies
- Collaboration: To collect and articulate better evidence requires greater collaboration but has resource challenges
- Technological approaches: new digital technologies offer more opportunities **but** we need a better understanding to ensure current approaches do not disadvantage any disciplines.

Thank you

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